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An Action Plan For The Skagit Wild and Scenic River

Professional Development in
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Abstract

A management plan was completed for the Skagit Wild and Scenic River System in 1983. It provided broad direction for considerably more work than can be accomplished with current or foreseeable budgets. This Action Plan, drawn from the management plan, focuses on selecting the highest priority tasks and on examining each task in greater detail. The four tasks selected include: (1) development of cooperative management agreements with key agencies; (2) implementing protective management for the threatened bald eagle; (3) completing a recreation use survey and (4) initiating measures that will foster better public understanding of - and then support for - Wild and Scenic River Management.

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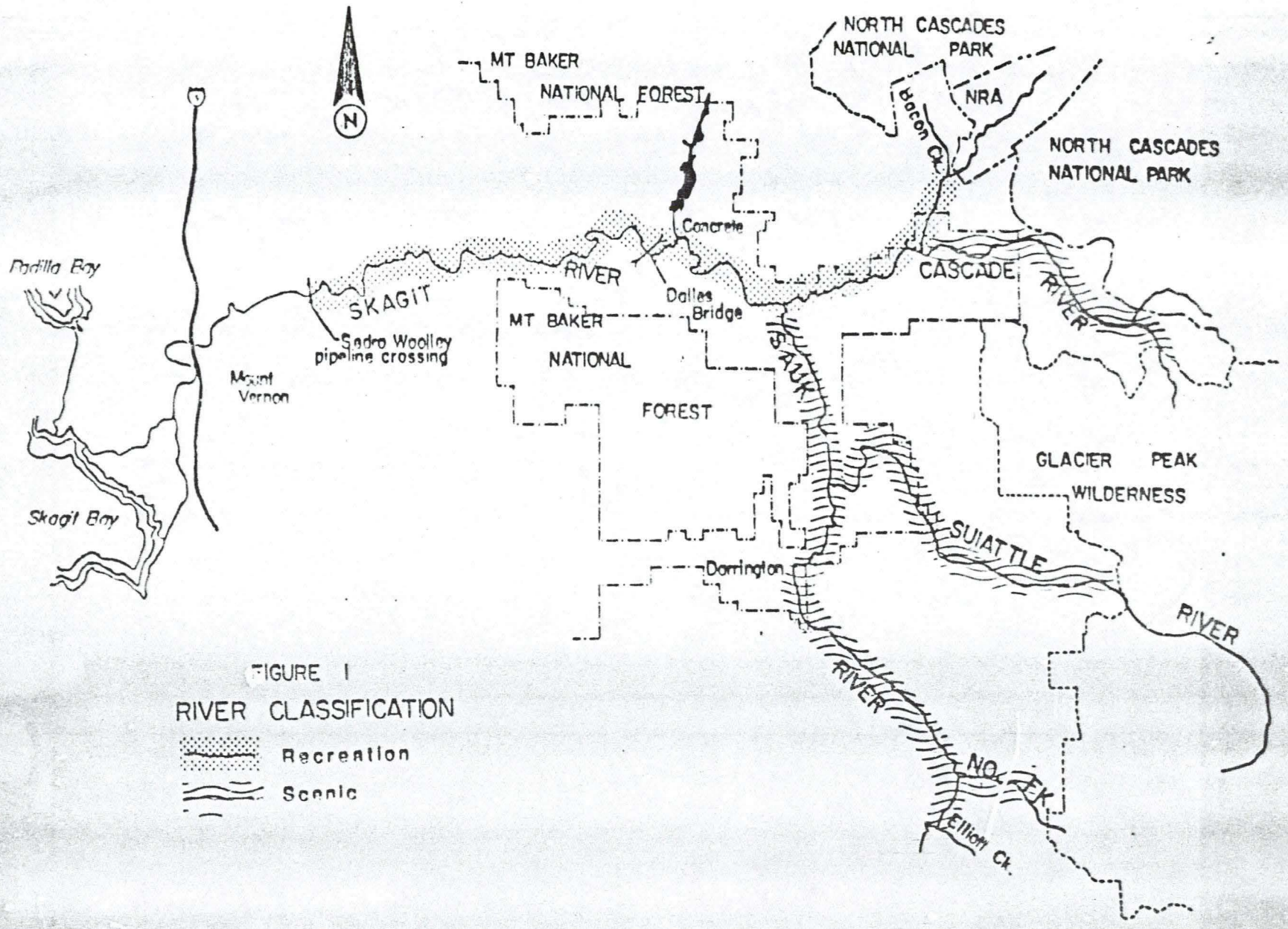
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MT BAKER
NATIONAL FOREST
NORTH CASCADES
NATIONAL PARK
NRA
Bacon Ck.
NORTH CASCADES
NATIONAL PARK
Concrete
Padilla Bay
SKAGIT
RIVER
Dalles
Bridge
CASCADE
RIVER
Sedro Woolley
pipeline crossing
MT BAKER
NATIONAL
FOREST
Mount
Vernon
SAUK
RIVER
GLACIER PEAK
WILDERNESS
Skagit Bay
SUIATTLE
RIVER
Darrington
RIVER
NO. FK.
Elliott Ck.
FIGURE 1
RIVER CLASSIFICATION
Recreation
Scenic

I. Introduction

Each of the rivers in the National Wild and Scenic River System has its own special character. The Skagit River System, as part of the largest drainage basin in the Puget Sound region, is no exception. Rivers of this system, the Skagit, Cascade, Suiattle, and Sauk, begin high in the glacier covered Cascade mountains and flow through rich forest and farm lands on their way to the Sound.

Five species of salmon, three species of sea run trout, and a number of resident fish live in this river system. It provides an estimated 30% of the anadromous fish entering Puget Sound. This fishery has an estimated value of $17 million during odd numbered years when the pink salmon migrate upstream, and $6 million in even numbered years.

The Skagit's uniqueness extends to its bird life as well. Wintering trumpeter swans occasionally utilize fields adjacent to the lower W & SR corridor. A few sightings have been made of peregrine falcons. Without question, however, the Skagit System's greatest distinction in the area of wildlife is its large population of wintering bald eagles which usually reach a peak from mid-January to mid-February.

The classified river segments are quite varied. Most of the Skagit has a rural and agricultural character as its "Recreation" classification might suggest. Roads parallel it on both sides for most of its length but generally are not very apparent from the river itself. Almost all of the Skagit's shoreline is in private ownership.

The lower stretches of the three tributary rivers are rural in character but become progressively more forested and primitive appearing as one travels upstream. They are all classed as "Scenic".

Recreational use of the rivers is quite varied. The Skagit attracts many visitors during the winter for eagle viewing and steelhead fishing. Another steelhead season opens in the spring. Summer canoeing and boating use tend to be moderate but are increasing. The Skagit is considered to be a flatwater river (within the W & SR corridor) though its current is fairly fast, it is very cold, and it has a variety of hazards that consume a number of canoes and other boats each year.

The Suiattle and Sauk are Class II-V whitewater rivers and attract boaters primarily in the spring and summer. They also host steelheaders in season. The Cascade receives relatively little boating use and is usually only utilized by expert kayakers in the spring because of its Class V-VI drops below Marble Creek. These rivers are also characterized by a large amount of sweepers, strainers and other woody debris that create special hazards for boaters.

The Skagit Wild and Scenic River Management Plan's History

The Skagit River System (segments of the Skagit, and three of its tributary rivers: the Cascade, the Suiattle, and the Sauk) was among 27 rivers listed for further study in the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (P.L. 90-542) to determine its suitability for Wild and Scenic River (W & SR) status.

This study was completed in 1977 and the accompanying Environmental Impact Statement recommended that the Skagit be added to the National W & SR System. Congress did so in 1978 (P.L. 95-625); in 1981 another one mile segment was added bringing the total mileage of classified river to 158.5 miles.

In 1983 a management plan was completed with notice to be published in the Federal Register in 1984. The study and planning processes have been very long and were distinguished by unusually high turnover on planning teams. At least six distinct teams worked on the study and plan. One feature which sets the Skagit W & SR apart from Region Six's other two Wild and Scenic Rivers, the Rogue and the Snake, is that about 80 miles of the 158.5 miles are outside the National Forest boundary and are bordered by mostly private land. During the study phase there were high expectations for the State to assume a lead role in managing the Skagit River segment. Lacking the necessary legislative direction State leadership has not materialized.

Early support for classification appears to have been mustered by a handful of individuals who forged a coalition of steelhead fishermen, environmental interests which focused on eagle protection, and anti-nuclear activists. Most of the support for Forest Service management disappeared once the Skagit System was classified and nuclear power development plans were scrapped.

Local support for the Management Plan and Forest Service management is quite low. Any move to implement the management plan, to regulate use, to acquire land or easements has been and will be met with costly adverse public reaction. Management actions to protect W & SR values, in short, wind up being overwhelmed by costly no-win public relations skirmishes.

Letters, public meetings and other sources of input during the river study and management plan development period have indicated three major areas of public concern: the loss of private property rights through Federal regulations and land acquisition; loss of opportunities to construct flood control structures, particularly the Sauk dam; and concerns relating to eagles, anadromous fish, recreationists and the effects of their interactions.

A management plan has been completed except for publication of the required notice in the Federal Register. The plan lists a wide variety of tasks which must be completed to comply with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the 1977 Study E.I.S., the 1981 W & SR USDA/USDI river management guidelines, and other direction.

Independently derived estimates were made by the two Ranger Districts with W & SR management responsibilities (Mt. Baker is responsible for the Skagit and Cascade; Darrington takes the Sauk and Suiattle) and S.O. recreation staff. These estimates agree that a minimum of four full-time employees would be required just to accomplish the higher priority tasks identified in this plan. An annual budget of about $175,000 would be necessary.

In 1984 the Mt. Baker District received about $10,000 and the Darrington District about $6,000 for the management of the W & SR System. One alternative for Regional Direction for the F.Y. 86 budget now being developed states that in R-6 only the Rogue and the Snake W & SR's will be managed at full service level. This direction strongly suggests that Skagit W & SR funding will not increase and may be reduced from its F.Y. 84 level.

While commitment to W & SR management within the National Forest boundary has been relatively strong there continues to be hesitation to begin managing privately-owned segments outside the N.F. boundary. Particularly in the years since 1980 (to '84) as the Forest's recreation budget dropped 37%, managers have expressed concern about putting funds into a new program outside National Forest boundaries while funding for established National Forest programs has been waning. Acquisition of parcels of property, rights-of-way, scenic easements and other interests strung out within 80 miles of privately owned river corridor promise a variety of management inefficiencies and could require very intensive management. Local hostility toward Wild and Scenic River management has further dampened managers' enthusiasm. The bottom line, however, is that management is required by statute and that a respectable showing is essential.

Action Plan Objectives:

This plan will focus on a five year period with a relatively firm proposal for only the first three years due to funding uncertainties beyond F.Y. 86. Priority tasks were agreed upon in late '83 and early '84 by representatives of both Ranger Districts, the S.O. and R.O. This process is described on page 14.

The priority selection process led to a focus on key tasks and to developing a strategy for working toward completing them. Areas of primary concern include:

a. Foster cooperative management agreements with the most essential of the 34 other agencies with river management responsibilities or interests.

b. Complete formal consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act. Of concern here is protection of habitat for the threatened bald eagle and the need to further examine disturbance of wintering eagles by recreationists.

c. Complete a recreation use survey. This survey is a prerequisite to completing eagle disturbance studies and for carrying capacity, allocation and other recreation management decisions.

d. Develop a strategy for improving public understanding of W & SR management and the Forest Service's management responsibility especially among local residents.

II. Review of the Literature and Other Information Sources

This paper looks at four general interrelated facets of Skagit System management. Each required a slightly different approach to collecting information on it.

General background analysis and management direction for an action plan is contained in the 1983 Final River Management Analysis (Vol. 1) and River Management Plan (Vol. II) - Skagit River. Additional insight on the origin of many pieces of management direction can be obtained from the 1977 Skagit Wild and Scenic River Study Report and Environmental Impact Statement. Still a third document that influenced management direction in the Plan was the 1982 National Wild and Scenic Rivers System - Final Revised Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification, and Management of River Areas published by the U.S. Departments of Interior and Agriculture.

A. Cooperative Management Agreements with Key Agencies

Both the 1983 Management Plan and the earlier study specified working cooperatively with other government organizations especially at the State and local levels.

A 1978 GAO report recommends coordinating Federal management with State and local zoning ordinances to reduce costs and to allow land owners greater flexibility to use their lands. This report states the Congressional Record for the Senate bill noted that the "Secretaries' power of condemnation was to be used to protect scenic and wild rivers from commercial and industrial destruction, not for indiscriminate acquisition". The power of condemnation was also to be used for acquisition of appropriate access sites.

Priesnitz and Harrison (1977) stress constant communication between managing agencies in managing river corridors in multiple ownership.

Other documents of particular significance in developing interagency coop agreements include:

Skagit County Shoreline Management Master Program (1976)
Skagit County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance (1978)
Skagit County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map - Eastern District (1981)
Washington Forest Practices Act Rules and Regulations (1982)
DNR Aquatic Land Management Plan for the Skagit River (1981)

B. Complete formal consultation with Fish and Wildlife Service on the threatened bald eagle.

Research has demonstrated the overwhelming importance of food, first chum and secondly coho salmon, in determining distribution of eagles in the Skagit System. The availability of perch sites, communal night roosts, staging areas, and the impact of human disturbance, are of less significance. In winters where eagles are stressed by a lack of salmon human disturbance will likely be of much greater importance.

Radio-tagged eagles have demonstrated an unusual amount of flexibility in broad-scale movement, traveling several hundred miles

in a short time, presumably in search of food. Because of this flexibility several researchers have raised questions about regional "carrying capacity" and the difficulties in assessing what it might be. The literature also suggests several areas where additional research is needed to clarify protective measures needed for bald eagles. Questions must be addressed on human disturbance and the level of stress on eagles, and habitat preservation needs especially feeding, perching and communal roosting areas. Also needed is better information on recreation use and its impacts on eagles.

Stalmaster and Newman (1978)

Stalmaster (1976)

Russell (1980)

Knight (1980)

Grainger & Johnson (1981)

Knight, et al (1980)

C. Complete a recreation use survey.

A recreation use survey is essential for W & SR management purposes for two reasons: (1) information on the nature and extent of river recreation use is necessary to assess questions on eagle disturbance and (2) more accurate use information is necessary to refine carrying capacity and commercial use allocation decisions in the Management Plan. A third need is to examine some of the sociological aspects of use which may help modify behavior (littering and property damage to private lands).

Two broad options exist for obtaining recreation use information: contracting for a survey (Shelby, 1979) or conducting a survey with Forest Service personnel.

Little has been done on the Skagit System rivers to count or accurately estimate actual recreation use. Marnell (1977) describes the various methods used to count river recreation users and the advantages and disadvantages of each method. Clark (1977) provides guidance on alternative strategies for studying river receationists. Great difficulty in measuring use can be expected on rivers such as the Skagit and its tributaries due to the uncontrolled access, fragmented jurisdictions and diverse recreation use patterns.

A variety of use information has been collected by various parties for use in managing their programs. Most of the use data is in the form of user counts with little associated sociological information. Since the data collected was intended to support specific but diverse programs, it can be used only as general background for W & SR management purposes.

Sources of use data include:

- Skagit County Parks and Recreation Dept., Howard Miller Steelhead Park, Rockport (Casual observations)
- Department of Game, Steelhead Fisherman Data
- Outfitting & Guiding Services conducting winter eagle trips. (Counts of clients)
- Washington Kayak Club (Counts of club trips)

A discussion of the W & SR system's estimated carrying capacity is provided in Vol. 1 River Management Analysis, pg. A141-A146. The estimated capacities will likely be modified when the recreation use study provides more reliable data. Use estimates used in calculations were of the lowest level of reliability.

Clark (1977) discusses strategies that can be used to research sociological aspects of river recreation use that would be of value in modifying depreciative behavior. Wellman, et al (1982) examined the specialization in canoeists to see whether a higher degree of specialization resulted in a higher level of environmental concern. Though a good correlation was not found the concept seems intuitively sound and the discussion is enlightening.

Shelby and Danley (1979) provide a discussion of use allocation, user group conflicts, and user classification that suggests useful planning direction for a river recreation use survey.

D. Improve public understanding of W & SR Management and the Forest Service's management responsibility especially among local residents. Significant problems exist, particularly with local people, in lack of support for W & SR management and even in understanding that the Skagit System has been classified for years.

The Analysis of Public Response to Issues (1979) and Letters on the Draft Management Plan (1982) characterize the concerns which have been expressed by individuals reacting to the management planning effort, especially local people.

The 1982 Letters responding to the Draft Analysis and Plan were directed primarily at the Management Plan and were suitable only in a general way to survey opinion. A content analysis is discussed in Section IV.

Fazio and Gilbert (1981) provide an excellent broad look at public relations in the natural resource field. Chapter Six provides helpful discussion on face to face contacts with visitors and on working with committees. Chapter Ten focuses on the elements of planning for good public relations.

Priesnitz and Harrison (1977) emphasize the need for constant involvement of local people in management decisions on rivers with multiple ownership corridors. Wilcox (1981) and Leonard et al (1981) focus on management styles and options for subtly changing unacceptable behavior.

Harrison (1977) and Peterson (1983) state that interpretive techniques and communication basics, respectively, can be used effectively to inform concerned publics and contribute to river corridor protection.

III. Procedures

A significant problem which has faced these Forest Service employees who will do the actual W & SR management job is the task of collecting, sorting, and evaluating the tremendous amount of material which has been compiled and written on the Skagit System but is widely scattered. At least three distinct teams worked in the Supervisor's Office on the Management Plan for over five years and almost all members have now resigned or retired. Functional area specialists, notably wildlife and fisheries biologists, have collected additional specialized information. Both the S.O. and Districts have been reorganized and materials have been moved and have become disorganized.

Library resources have provided another source of technical information especially on river recreation management.

A rich source of information on the river corridor has been people, especially local residents and County and State employees. Forest Service personnel on the Darrington and Mt. Baker Ranger Districts and in the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie N.F. Supervisor's Office also were essential contacts.

A. Selection of Priority Tasks for the Action Plan

The Management Plan contains a four page listing of tasks summarized from the body of the plan (see Vol. II, pg. A123-126). These tasks were listed by priority into high, medium and lower priority groups. Since anticipated budgets are only a fraction of what would be required to accomplish just the high priority group of tasks, some refinement has been necessary. This priority refinement was accomplished by developing a consensus first between the Districts and then with the S.O. and R.O.

A selection matrix is provided in the Summary on page 40. Selection criteria included:

1. An estimation of how significantly the task accomplishment would contribute to meeting Management Plan objectives.

2. Statutory or other direction which specifically required task accomplishment.

3. Timeliness. It is essential to complete certain projects before others can be initiated.

4. Other factors. Some factors had to be considered because they would have a major bearing on a W & SR management program. For example, Skagit County has several programs which affect all but six miles of the ± 80 miles of river corridor outside the N.F. boundary.

B. Examination of Priority Tasks

Each of the four selected tasks was evaluated in a similar fashion:

1. Review of the literature and other information sources.
2. Interviewing individuals with unique knowledge or responsibilities for accomplishment of the task.
3. Formulation of a course of action.

IV. Discussion of Findings

Once priority tasks had been agreed upon more detailed examination of each was required to refine an accomplishment strategy. As mentioned earlier, these highest priority tasks were first, to develop cooperative agreements with key agencies, and second to complete formal consultation on bald eagles with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The third task is to complete a recreation use survey and the fourth is to develop a strategy to improve public understanding of W & SR management and the Forest Service's role especially among local residents.

A. Develop cooperative agreements with key agencies

A variety of tasks are listed in the Management Plan which require the development of cooperative agreements with agencies and other government entities. (See pages 7, 8, 11, 16, 50-51, and 59 or the Task Summary on p. A123-126.) Responsibilities of other agencies are discussed in Vol. 1, p. 161-183.

There are at least 34 government entities and several organizations with varying responsibilities and/or interests in management of the classified segments of the Skagit System. Selection of which agencies to work with first must involve an evaluation of the degree of responsibility each has, its importance in meeting F.S. W & SR objectives and the involvement of each in managing aspects of the river corridor.

Cooperative Agreements

At this time the major opportunities for Cooperative Agreements are with:

1. Skagit County, more specifically with the County Planning Department and Permit Center. Of the approximately 30 miles of classified river outside the National Forest boundary all but 6 are in Skagit County.

   Skagit County administers the local Shoreline Management Master Program which was initiated in recognition of the fact "that the shorelines of the state are among the most valuable and fragile of our natural resources..." Further, the program emphasizes the urgent need for planning and management of these resources while recognizing private property rights. Skagit County also administers County Zoning and Flood Damage Prevention Ordinances which affect development and use of lands within the 100 year flood plain. Most of the 100 year flood plain addressed in the ordinance corresponds very closely to the W & SR boundary.

A coop agreement should focus on a careful review of the County of Shoreline Master Program. Cooperative review of permit applications may be desirable.

Opportunities for making the Shoreline Program and various ordinances and W & SR Management Plan more compatible must also be explored. Tentative plans have been made with Skagit County and other key agencies to meet and explore opportunities to accomplish this. It may be desirable to try to fund a 3-6 month position to review the appropriate programs and to develop recommendations for modifications to the Shorelines Management Program and/or zoning ordinances. Multi-agency funding opportunities will be explored.

2. Washington Department of Natural Resources

The DNR manages State Trust lands within the W & SR corridor and State aquatic lands underlying portions of the classified rivers, particularly the Skagit. The agency also administers the rules and regulations promulgated under the State's Forest Practices Act. These rules direct forest practices including timber harvest, road building and reforestation on private lands within the Skagit System corridor.

State-owned beds of navigable rivers are not subject to income-maximization restrictions as are trust lands. This ownership of river beds is primarily restricted to the Skagit River and management direction is contained in the DNR's Aquatic Land Management Plan for the Skagit River.

A coop agreement should focus on participating in reviews of Forest Practices Applications within the W & SR corridor, particularly those which may have an adverse impact on eagle habitat, water quality, cultural resources, and the view from the river.

Development of coop agreements should also include an examination of the Aquatic Land Management Plan for the Skagit River and the compatibility of its listed management policies with W & SR objectives.

3. Washington Department of Fisheries

The Department of Fisheries has responsibility for management of five species of Pacific salmon in the Skagit System. It manages the fish hatchery at Marblemount and has responsibility with the Department of Game for administration of the State's hydraulic permit program. "...In the event any person or government agency desires to construct any form of hydraulic project, or other work that will use, divert, obstruct or utilize any of the waters of the State of materials from the streambanks" plans must be submitted and written approval must be obtained.

In the past few years the Department has considered several fish habitat improvement projects on the Skagit which have required Forest Service involvement.

4. Washington Department of Game

The Dept. of Game has responsibility to preserve, protect, and perpetuate the wildlife of the State. The Department, in addition to this management responsibility for all wildlife in the W & SR corridor, manages the State's game fish, which for the Skagit are most notably winter and summer steelhead.

The Department is involved with the Nature Conservancy in management of the Skagit Bald Eagle Natural Area and through its non-game program it maintains an active interest in Bald Eagles throughout the Skagit System. The agency also has constructed and maintains (with Skagit Co. Rd. District) boat and trailer access ramps along the Skagit River.

5. U.S. Dept. of the Army, Corps of Engineers

The Corps is periodically involved in tasks relating to the Skagit System but the ones of primary interest are those which would affect stream banks or the free flowing character of the river.

A formalized agreement with the Corps may involve only a minor effort since the Forest Service routinely receives notices of all Corps' actions in the area - many of which wouldn't affect the W & SR. The notices involve Forest Service review opportunities. (Vol. 1 River Management Analysis Skagit River p. 178-81)

6. Snohomish County

The County has responsibility for six of the approximately 80 miles of private ownership along the classified river segments. The situation with Snohomish County is similar to that described for Skagit County.

Cost Estimates & Priorities for Cooperative Agreements with Key Agencies

Cooperative Agreement Priority 1

Develop Coop Agreement with Skagit County. With County Planning Department staff examine R&S-3 p. 7; R&S-5, R&S-6, R&S-7, R&S-8 p. 8; R&S-3, R&S-4 p. 13; R&S-1, R&S-2 p. 14; R&S-3 p.15; R&S-4 p. 16.

Estimate 120 hours GS-11 ($15/hr.) to establish points of agreement and rough out MOU and processes. (Mt. Baker-lead) $ 1,800*

Hire an individual to examine Shorelines Management Program, County zoning ordinances and W & SR Plan for needed adjustments to the former. $12,000 total plus legal review for County. Seek multiagency financing-F.S. Contribution $8,000. $ 8,000**

Cooperative Agreement Priority 2

- Initiate action to develop a coop. agreement with DNR focusing on complementary aims of the W & SR Act and this management plan, Forest Practices Act, and Aquatic Lands Management Program. (GS-11 - 40 hrs.) $ 600*

- Initiate action to develop coop. agreements with the Departments of Game and Fisheries focusing on complementary objectives of the 1968 W & SR Act and the Management Plan, the Hydraulics Permit program, and on the interrelationships between fish, eagles and people. $ 800*

Cooperative Agreement Priority 3

- Initiate coop. agreement with Snohomish County similar to the one developed for Skagit County. $ 400
- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Army Corps of Engineers (R & S-6, p. 16). This is a lower priority since the Corps seems to be effectively notifying the Forest Service of any significant matters relating to W & SR management. $ 400

B. Complete formal consultation on Bald Eagles with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Among the various responsibilities of the Fish and Wildlife Service probably the most significant to local Forest Service management is their role with the 1973 Federal Endangered Species Act. Section 7 of the 1973 Act requires that the Forest Service consult with the USFWS on its management plans and programs that may affect, either adversely or beneficially, federally listed threatened or endangered species. Informal consultation has been initiated with the USFWS and continuing efforts are needed to complete formal consultation.

Primary concern relates to the recreation use levels that disturb and stress wintering bald eagles. The Marblemount to Rockport area is the area of major concern but the tributary rivers must be considered also. The USFWS has stated they feel that formal consultation must be completed before the W & SR Mgmt. Plan can be implemented. They are also aware that a which-comes-first paradox exists between the need to initiate protective measures and the legal requirement to complete formal consultation on the Management Plan before such a plan is implemented.

Consultation with personnel of the USFWS Endangered Species Section on the development of this action plan suggests that it may be most beneficial to continue consulting on a regular but informal basis. The Fish and Wildlife Service can provide recommendations and encouragement on specifying the most productive types of research to pursue and on obtaining funding for it.

Cost Estimates and Priorities for Formal Consultation with USFWS

Complete Formal Consultation on Bald Eagles with USFWS Management Plan direction includes several items likely to be included (Mt. Baker to lead):

- R & S-2, p. 17 and R & S-10, p. 47. Determine recreation use levels and attendant biological and social impacts, etc. A year round survey will be required. GS-9 supervision GS-3, 4 and volunteers or contract)

- Initiate Force Account Study (3 years) $6,000/yr.**
  (or contract for $15,000)
- R & S-3, p. 50 and S-12, p. 51. Monitor eagle population trends and survey salmon carcasses $21,360
- R & S-5, p. 50. Initiate studies on disturbance factors and estimate maximum recreation use levels. Contract $50,000/yr.-2 yrs
- R & S-7, p. 50. Complete eagle habitat classification. $12,000
- R & S-8, p. 50. Complete communal night roost survey and estimate protection needs $12,800

C. Complete a recreation use survey.

Recreation use information is needed for a variety of management purposes. First there is a need to assess the significance of disturbance of eagles by recreational boaters. Second, is a need to reassess opportunities that are to be allocated to commercial operators on segments of the Sauk and Suiattle within the National Forest boundary. A third need is to examine problems with littering, property damage and other depreciative behavior on private land within the corridor.

The basic questions that need to be answered in this survey include a description of what's happening, where, and how much. Secondarily, it would also be of value to examine why it is happening and how behaviors can be modified or changed.

Few people have expressed the concern that the W & SR corridor is overused. Because these rivers are accessible every few miles by roads, old ferry crossings, or user-built access use patterns tend to be very complex and, with all the private land involved, are quite challenging to manage. Use of the classified segments of the four rivers can be described in general terms:

1. The Skagit-primary high use periods occur during winter and spring steelhead seasons. Peak use probably occurs when wintering eagles reach peak concentrations during January and February. Use is almost exclusively on weekends. Bank use occurs throughout the year as does canoeing use.

2. The Cascade - very light boating use. The river is characterized by an abundance of sweepers, strainers, and log jams. Light spring expert kayaking from Marble Creek to confluence with class V or VI drops.

3. The Sauk and Suiattle - Primarily used for steelhead fishing and spring and summer whitewater boating. Suiattle will maintain good flows longer into the summer due to glacier melt. Rapidly accelerating commercial use was limited in 1978 by an Interim Management Plan primarily to protect management options. At that time there were questions on crowding, bank impacts, and capability of F.S. administration to adequately monitor Outfitters and Guides.

Moderate bank use occurs along these rivers primarily along trails, at campgrounds, and river crossings.

Of the two options for getting a recreation use survey done, contracting or force account, the former offers the greatest advantages. Contracting with a university under a negotiated professional services contract taps into a proven source of expertise and often will capitalize on lower cost graduate student labor.

A time frame and the nature of the final report can be agreed to in the contract. In times of economic hardship funds programmed to do such work by force account are often redirected to other underfunded tasks through the course of the year and the quality of the final use survey is not likely to be as professional or timely.

The contract should be for a year long survey which would focus most heavily on; (1) December to March float trips from Marblemount to Rockport, (2) spring and summer whitewater use on the Sauk and Suiattle and (3) a lack of depreciative behavior on river segments bordered by private lands. Estimated cost would be about $15,000.

D. Develop a strategy for improving public understanding of W & SR management and the Forest Service's management responsibility especially among local residents.

During the public review period for the Draft Assessment and Plan response from local residents was very hostile. The review stimulated a petition to declassify the Skagit, letters to the editors of local newspapers, editorials and derogatory political cartoons. Many comments suggested a lack of understanding that the river had been classified in 1978. Much of the hostility relates to a perceived loss of property rights and additional regulation by the Federal Government.

A number of potential subjects of common interest were implied or mentioned in the letters responding to the Draft plan and could be points to gather local support around. A process to enhance local public understanding or river management and the W & SR Acts objectives is obviously needed. Without public support and understanding management efforts will be substantially encumbered, perhaps fatally, by adverse publicity and negative public reaction. For many efforts such as land or ROW acquisition or regulation of use, public acceptance, or preferably support, is very important.

A content review of the 88 letters received during the Draft Plan public review period in November and December 1982 suggested major points of concern. These points are consistent with verbal comments received during public meetings and plan and study input received earlier.

These letters were subdivided into five categories: Individuals (44 letters), Organizations (14), Agencies (17), Companies (10) and Forest Service (3).

1. Concerns listed in individual letters are summarized below:
   - Loss of property rights (14 letters, one with 13 signatures). These all appeared to be owners of property adjacent to the river. Another concern related to property damage, littering and liability for tourists/recreationalists (7).
   - Concern for active flood control measures especially the

perceived need for continued river bed gravel extraction and debris removal (6 letters, one with 12 signatures).

- Concern for fishing, the fisheries resource and anadromous fish, (11 letters). Fish related concerns came mostly from the Sedro Woolley-Burlington area. Most recognized eagle-boater conflict and cited years of experience that showed no significant impacts on birds. Related comments expressed a desire for no more dams or harmful shoreline development.
- A variety of concerns were expressed about eagles:
  - More control over rafters to protect eagles (2).
  - Study boating impacts, eagles, and salmon (4).
  - Concern for more study of eagle and fish interrelationship (3
  - More interpretation on eagles (3).
- A number of letters expressed general support for the plan (9).
- A concern which was expressed for several different reasons was that no additional recreation development of the river corridor should occur (12).
* - A variety of stated or implied concerns were included in these letters which may suggest direction for improved public relations and sound management.
  - "Must be able to show good reasons for management proposals".
  - 'Meet with us or go out and look with us at the river'. (3)
  - Managers must work with people (3)..
  - There was very little support for any action especially facility development that would increase recreation use.

Landowners, those concerned about eagles, and a variety of others expressed this feeling.

- Many letters indicated a lack of awareness that the Skagit System had already been classified as a W & SR; many letters showed no understanding of the F.S. management responsibility and that of other agencies. These were all Skagit Valley resident letters.

2. Major concerns expressed by agencies are summarized below:

- Skagit and Snohomish Counties expressed concern for the financial impacts of examining zoning, ordinances, and the Shoreline Master program and the stated need to make them compatible with objectives of the W & SR plan. Skagit County also expressed uncertainty about the County and F.S. roles in the tri-level management scheme proposed.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and State Dept. of Game focused primarily on protection of the threatened bald eagle and its habitat. The USFWS has specified that "formal consultation" must be completed before the plan is implemented.
- The Skagit System Cooperative and BIA expressed the concern that they be recognized as fisheries co-managers with the State.
- The Skagit Conservation District and Skagit River Flood Control Committee urged consideration for downstream values and flooding problems. They stressed the need for cooperative management.

3. Organizations (14 letters) tended to focus most heavily on questioning the Plan's statistics on the amount of recreation use, allocation of opportunities between commercial and non-commercial users and concerns for eagles. Also mentioned were concerns for completing a five year action plan, expressions of concern for downgrading recreation opportunities by expanding or improving existing developments and questions of whether the F.S. would receive adequate appropriations for management.

4. Companies, primarily timber companies and timber trade associations tended to focus on restrictive management direction that would restrain their management options for holdings within the W & SR.

Although there are weaknesses in this loosely structured content analysis the results are very consistent with the comments received in day to day contacts and earlier surveys of public concern. A variety of suggestions emerged directly and indirectly from those letters that could help improve W & SR public relations.

1. Publication of a Skagit System W & SR Map.
   a. It would help accomplish R & S-1, p. 46 and many of the interpretive direction items listed on page 43.
   b. The Skagit W & SR has no identity! Many people in the Skagit drainage don't even know it has been classified

and many more don't relate to it as a unit of the National Wild & Scenic River System. A map would encourage recognition of the Skagit W & SR System as an entity.

c. Signs could also be used to encourage recognition. However, with the existing local negative feeling toward the Wild and Scenic River classification it may be impossible to maintain signs until this sentiment is improved. The initial cost of signs, the number needed to cover access and river viewpoints, and possible costs of posting on non-National Forest lands would make this task very expensive.

d. A map is a convenient tool to make a statement of management philosophy and concerns. It can be a good tool for interpretation of eagles, fish, habitat, people and their interaction. It could also be used to promote recognition of private land adjacent to much of this river and the need to respect and protect private property.

e. A map would be a sale item and would not promote the area quite as much as free publications might.

f. A map could save much time now devoted to answering commonly asked questions.

g. No single map of reasonable scale and detail exists for the Skagit W & SR System.

h. Since publication of a map will require coordination with many agencies, groups, and perhaps individuals it could be used as a tool to draw people together and to focus attention on the F.S. Wild and Scenic River Management role.

i. One significant drawback to using a map to promote the Skagit's identity is the time required to produce it. Because the Forest was unable to move on a W & SR map in 1983 the production schedule has shifted from '85 to '86. Production of a new base map will be the major problem. Text and graphics could be started now by the Forest Landscape Architect (Erickson) as a training exercise and has been inserted in his annual Individual Development Plan. Such a map could have a significant impact if it were available in time for Vancouver's Expo 86.

2. Cost Estimate for W & SR Map:

Forest L.A. will work on graphics and layout as part of his '84 Individual Development Plan (80 hours). Supplemental assistance from District Rec. Tech. (20 hours).

Other options should be explored for an interim map and for financing. Check with PNNPFA, The Mountaineers Publications Committee, and Greentrails Maps to see if they would have an interest in publishing such a map.

Another promising possibility would be to periodically work with small groups of selected local individuals on carefully identified problems. The mission of the working group would be limited to resolution of one problem and/or a specified period of time. This could capitalize on fresh ideas, build local support for solutions, and show F.S. willingness to work with interested people.

A number of letters stated a desire to work with Forest Service managers to look at the river and particular problems. Standing advisory committees have been used by the Forest Service and have had a variety of drawbacks.

Management committees of agency representatives which require a concensus of members for approval as used on the Rogue River, have had questionable, even detrimental, value. Cooperation and controversy vary with political tides and personalities of members.

Such ad hoc committee action could be used for:

1. Examining the eagle disturbance question to develop management recommendations.
2. Collecting information on depreciative behavior on privately owned river corridor lands and developing recommendations to correct the problems.
3. Staging periodic show me trips to get managers, key political figures and key local people together.

V. Summary and Conclusions

The Management Plan completed in 1983 for the Skagit System W & SR specified direction for considerably more work than could be accomplished with the budgets anticipated. Personnel from the two affected Ranger Districts, the Forest Supervisor's Office, and the Regional Office worked on selecting the most critical tasks from the Management Plan's listing of high priorities.

The selection of the most critical priorities was done by developing a consensus among managers. A review of the extensive background of these tasks in the 1977 Study and Analysis (Vol. 1) was required as was a literature review. A variety of individuals with expertise on certain management elements were also consulted.

The listing below constitutes the tasks that will form an action plan for the first two years and establishes a foundation for the following years. The projects marked with a single asterisk are those which will be accomplished within FY '84 and anticipated '85 budgets. Those projects marked with a double asterisk are currently unfunded projects which must be accomplished in order to proceed with the rest of the plan. Additional recreation funding (end of the year dollars) must be requested from the R.O.

Wildlife tasks shown are also unfunded. These tasks are those likely to be specified by the Fish and Wildlife Service as being essential to comply with the Endangered Species Act. The F & WS also feels these projects must be completed before the plan is implemented.

Task & Priority	Cost Estimate
A. Initiate work on six Interagency Cooperative Agreements to formalize cooperation and monitoring.	
Priority 1	
1. Skagit County - define roles and focus on making existing zoning and Shoreline program work to protect W & SR values. (Mt. Baker-lead)	$ 1,800*
Review of Shoreline Program, County Zoning and Ordinances.	$ 8,000**
2. Complete formal consultation with USFWS (Mt. Baker-lead)	
- Recreation use survey (contract)	$15,000**
- Monitor eagle populations	$21,360
- Disturbance studies (eagles/people)	$50,000/yr.-2 yrs.
- Complete Eagle habitat classification	$12,000
- Communal night roost survey	$12,800
- Program Management cost to initiate action and for followup	$ 1,200/yr.*
Priority 2	
- Cooperative Agreement with D.N.R. (Mt. Baker-lead)	$ 600*
- Cooperative Agreements with Departments of Fisheries and Game (Darrington and Mt. Baker)	$ 800*

Task & Priority	Cost Estimate
Priority 3	
- Coop. Agreement in Snohomish Co. (Darr. lead)	$ 400
- M.O.U. with Corps of Engineers (Darr. Mt. Baker)	$ 400

B. Complete a recreation use survey. The cost of this item ($15,000) is shown under V.A.2. since a use survey is an integral part of eagle disturbance studies. It is, however, also a prerequisite for possible future decisions on carrying capacity and allocating use opportunities. Further, information on users will be needed for the foundation of a strategy to reduce littering and property damage.

C. Improve public understanding of W & SR management and the Forest Service's management role.

Letters written to the Forest Service commenting on the Draft Management Plan suggested several actions that could improve public relations. These actions included increasing interaction with local residents in decision making and providing more information to them on the river. Quite a number of letters suggested that many people didn't understand that the Skagit System had been classified several years earlier.

Publishing a W & SR map would be a significant step in promoting the Skagit's identity as a component of the National W & SR System. It would also present factual information on commonly asked questions on these rivers. Estimate costs to get a camera ready copy together would amount to about $1,500.

Another action that should be pursued is to involve selected local individuals in ad hoc committees designed to provide recommendations for specific problems.

One general area which must be mentioned to round out the budgetary picture is the cost for routine and on-going administrative actions. These actions include but are not limited to the following:

- Processing special use applications
- Processing actions under the mining laws
- Sec. 7a determinations on developmental proposals
- Coordination with the Department of Ecology and especially the Counties on the Shoreline Program.

These routine actions amounted to $6,500 of salary of F.Y. 83 and are anticipated to cost the same in F.Y. 84 and 85.

The program of action items listed in this paper is expected to provide a sound basis for the Skagit W & SR management phase which is beginning this fiscal year. Although the management plan is considered to be a dynamic tool, the emphasis will shift from planning to management in F.Y. 84 after notification of the availability of the final plan is published in the Federal Register, the 90 day comment period is concluded, and appropriate adjustments are made to the plan.

	Timeliness	Other Notes
s	- Necessary to implement shoreline protective measures. - Prerequisite to developing land acquisition plan.	Seventy two of the ± eighty miles of river corridor outside of the National Forest Boundary are within Skagit Co. - Shorelines Management Master Program - Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map - Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance
	- Necessary to begin implementation of plan. - Necessary to initiate a well planned effort to protect or enhance bald eagle habitat.	Fish & Wildlife Service has advised that formal consultation must be completed before plan is implemented ESA & Regulations. FWS ltr. 12/20/82
		Co-administrators of Hydraulics Permit Program. Dept. of Game's Non-game section has a mutual interest in bald eagle management. Also, manage the Skagit Bald Eagle Natural Area with the Nature Conservatory. Administers Forest Practices Act Rules and Regulations. Manage State trust lands and Aquatic lands.
	- Could wait until Coop. Aggreement with Skagit Co. complete to use it as model.	Similar to Skagit County but for only ± 6 miles of river. The Corps has generally incorporated F.S. review of projects in its planning process
	- Necessary to assess human disturbance on eagles. - Necessary to refine carrying capacity and allocation decisions.	
	- An improvement in public relations is required for successful of implement of Plan outside N.F. boundary.	Providing information on Forest Service programs is a fundamental part of our job. Public support is essential to our success.

FACTORS CONSIDERED IN THE PRIORITY SELECTION PROCESS

Task	Criteria	Meets Mgmt. Direction in W&SR Plan	Statutory and Other Direction
1.	Develop Cooperative Management Agreement with Skagit County.	R&S-1 & 3 p.7 R&S-5,6,7 & 8,p. 8 R&S-5 & 6, p. 11 R&S-4, p. 16 R&S-4, p. 46	Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. Sec. 3 (b) GAO Report (1978) Skagit Study EIS
2.	Complete formal consultation with Fish & Wildlife Service.	R&S-10, p.9 Will lead to R&S-3,5,6,7,8, p.50 R&S-9,11,12, p. 51 R&S-10, p. 47 R&S-1, p. 59	Endangered Species Act.
3.	Work to develop Coop. Management Agreements with key agencies selected from the 34 gov. entities with river management interests or responsibilities.		
	a. Wash. Dept. of Game and b. Wash. Dept. of Fisheries	R&S-1 & 3 p. 7 R&S-5 & 8 p. 8 R&S-1,4, & 6 p. 50 R&S-1,2,7,8,9, p.53	Wild & Scenic River Act. Skagit Study EIS
	c. Wash. Dept. of Natural Resources		Wild & Scenic River Act. Skagit Study EIS
	d. Snohomish County	Same References as for Skagit Co.	Wild & Scenic River Act.
	e. Corps of Engineers	R&S-6 p. 16	Wild & Scenic River Act. Skagit Study EIS
4.	Complete Recreation Use Survey	R&S-2, p. 17 R&S-10, p. 47 R&S-5, p. 50 R&S-1, p. 59	
5.	Increase public contacts and improve public relations especially with local residents.	R&S-4, p. 43	

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